THIS MAGAZINE IS
HAUNTED
10¢
WARNING! THIS MAGAZINE IS ONLY FOR THOSE WHO CAN STAND THE STRANGE TERROR OF THE SUPERNATURAL!
Doctor Death
NO. 6
DEC,
THE HOUSE IN THE WEB
THE AGED CURSE
THE DANCE OF THE DEAD

THIS MAGAZINE IS HAUNTED

WEIRD!

EERIE!

SPINE-TINGLING!

ON SALE AT YOUR FAVORITE NEWSSTAND 10¢

THIS MAGAZINE IS HAUNTED

Executive Editor WILL LIEBERSON • Editor V. A. PROVISIERO • Art Editor AL JETTER

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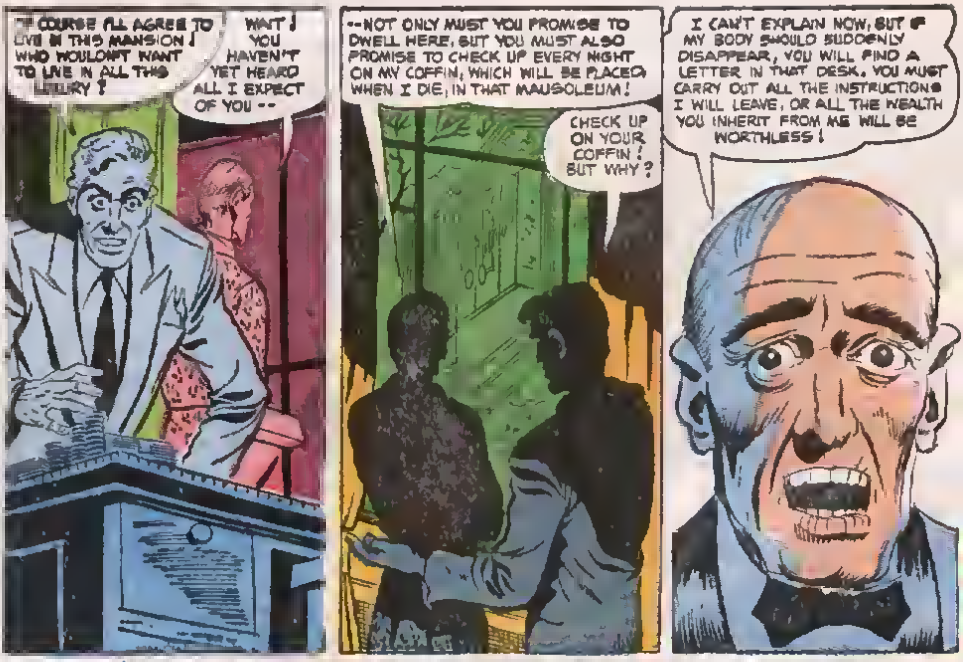
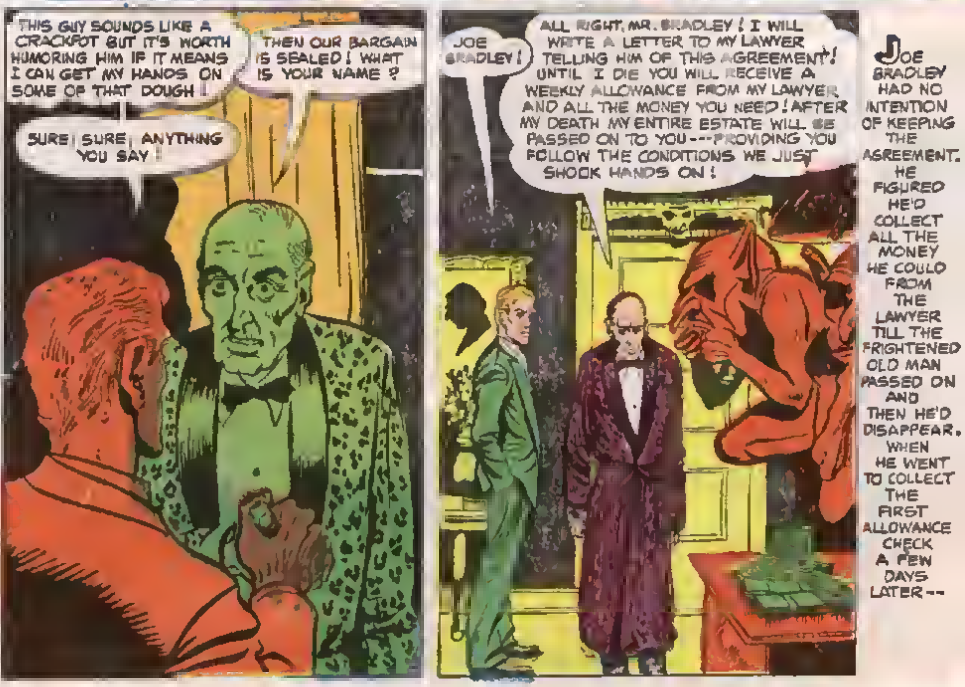
EVERYONE ENVIED THE OWNER OF CASTLE HILLS FOR ANYONE WHO COULD AFFORD TO LIVE IN SUCH A HUGE MANSION HAD TO BE FABULOUSLY WEALTHY!
THAT IS, EVERY-ONE ENVIED THE OWNER OF CASTLE HILLS BUT THE OWNER OF CASTLE HILLS HIMSELF .... CHARLES GRAYSON.
WHAT GOOD IS ALL THIS WEALTH IF I'M GOING TO HAVE TO PAY FOR IT AFTER DEATH WITH MY BODY AND SOUL!
GOOD EVENING, MR. GRAYSON! I COULDN'T HELP BUT OVERHEAR WHAT YOU JUST SAID! BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT BEFORE YOU MADE THAT PACT WITH ME!
(GASP) WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE AVARICE? MY TIME HASN'T COME YET!
(GULP!) I FEEL ANOTHER ATTACK COMING ON!
PERHAPS YOUR TIME HASN'T COME YET, GRAYSON! BUT IT WILL VERY SHORTLY! PILLS CAN'T SAVE YOU! THEY'LL ONLY DELAY THE END A FEW DAYS!
I CAN SEE YOUR IMAGE IN THE MIRROR, BUT WHERE ARE YOU?
YOU KNOW WHERE I AM, GRAYSON! IN THE ONE PLACE YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY KILL ME---IMBEDDED IN YOUR SOUL!
LEAVE ME ALONE!
AS YOU WISH FOR NOW, GRAYSON--HA, HA--- BUT I'LL BE BACK SHORTLY TO SEE THAT YOU DON'T BREAK OUR PACT!
CRASH

AVARICE SAYS THERE IS NO WAY OUT FOR ME, BUT THERE REALLY IS ! IF ONLY I COULD FIND SOMEONE I COULD TRUST TO GUARD MY COFFIN PERPETUALLY AFTER I'VE PASSED ON !
WHAT WAS THAT NOISE I JUST HEARD DOWNSTAIRS ? CAN IT BE AVARICE COMING BACK TO TAUNT ME SOME MORE ?
IT'S A BURGLAR TRYING TO OPEN MY SAFE ! THIS MIGHT BE THE ANSWER TO ALL MY WORRIES !
HEY, YOU--COME UP HERE !
WHAT !
DON'T SHOOT ! YOUR GREED HAS LED YOU INTO A LIFE OF CRIME ! WELL, I'M WILLING TO GIVE YOU MORE RICHES THAN YOU CAN DREAM OF PROVIDING YOU AGREE TO DO JUST ONE THING FOR ME IN RETURN !
DON'T TRY ANY TRICKS WITH ME MISTER ! THIS GUN IS LOADED !
(GULP!) I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MUCH MONEY BEFORE IN MY WHOLE LIFE ! WHAT IS IT YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU ?
ALL THIS MONEY AND MUCH MORE IS ALL YOURS PROVIDING YOU PROMISE TO LIVE IN THIS HOUSE AFTER I DIE !



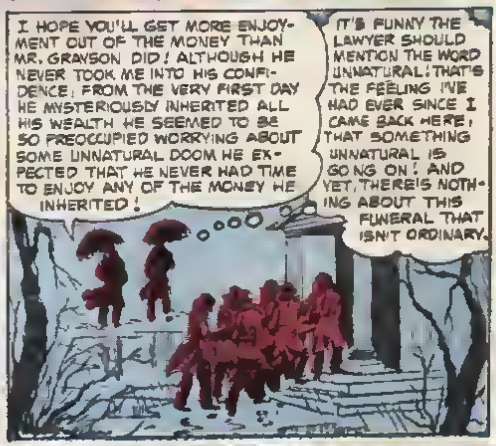


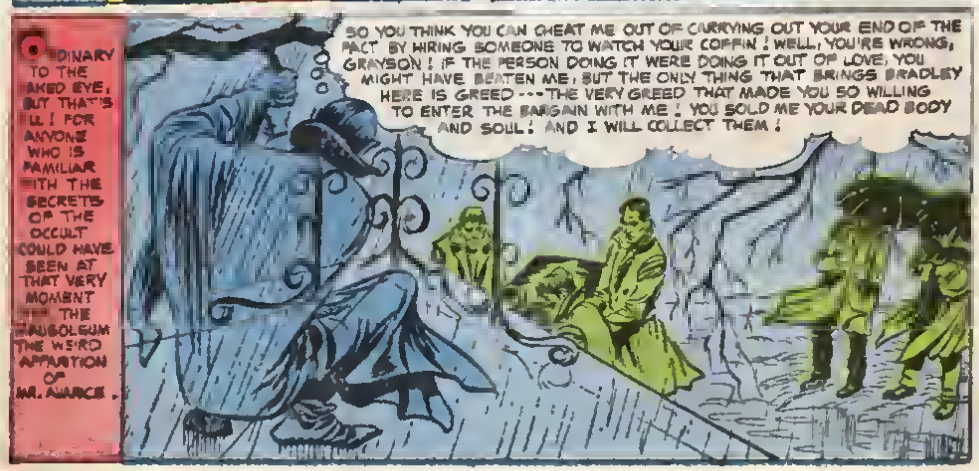
JOE BRADLEY HAD NO INTENTION OF KEEPING THE AGREEMENT. HE FIGURED HE'D COLLECT ALL THE MONEY HE COULD FROM THE LAWYER TILL THE FRIGHTENED OLD MAN PASSED ON AND THEN HE'D DISAPPEAR. WHEN HE WENT TO COLLECT THE FIRST ALLOWANCE CHECK A FEW DAYS LATER--

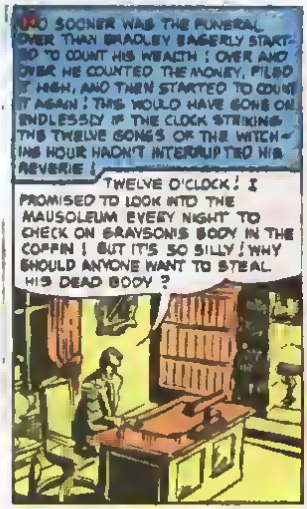
I'M AFRAID I HAVE BAD NEWS FOR YOU, MR. BRADLEY! MR. GRAYSON PASSED AWAY LAST NIGHT! THERE WILL BE NO ALLOWANCE CHECKS FOR YOU! HOWEVER, THE ENTIRE ESTATE IS YOURS PROVIDING YOU LIVE UP TO THE CONDITIONS OF HIS WILL!
YOU MEAN IF I GO BACK AND LIVE IN THE MANSION---AND (GULP!) CHECK UP ON HIS COFFIN EVERY NIGHT!

EXACTLY! DO YOU AGREE TO THOSE CONDITIONS?

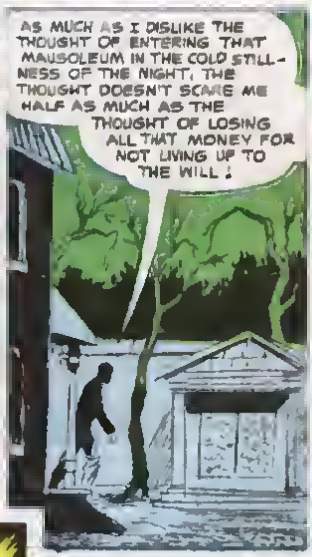
AN ODD PREMONITION OF FUTURE DOOM STRUCK BRADLEY AT THAT VERY MOMENT, BUT THE THOUGHT OF ALL THE MONEY HE HAD SEEN IN THE DEAD MAN'S ROOM BLURRED HIS SENSES TO ANYTHING ELSE!
OKAY! I'LL DO IT!
GOOD! NOW SINCE MR. GRAYSON HAD NO FRIENDS, I THINK THE LEAST WE COULD DO FOR HIM IS TO ATTEND HIS FUNERAL! I'M AFRAID BESIDES THE PROFESSIONAL PALL BEARERS, WE'LL BE THE ONLY ONES THERE!

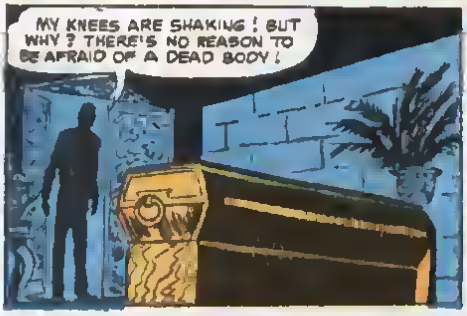

I HOPE YOU'LL GET MORE ENJOYMENT OUT OF THE MONEY THAN MR. GRAYSON DID! ALTHOUGH HE NEVER TOOK ME INTO HIS CONFIDENCE; FROM THE VERY FIRST DAY HE MYSTERIOUSLY INHERITED ALL HIS WEALTH HE SEEMED TO BE SO PREOCCUPIED WORRYING ABOUT SOME UNNATURAL DOOM HE EXPECTED THAT HE NEVER HAD TIME TO ENJOY ANY OF THE MONEY HE INHERITED!
IT'S FUNNY THE LAWYER SHOULD MENTION THE WORD UNNATURAL! THAT'S THE FEELING I'VE HAD EVER SINCE I CAME BACK HERE; THAT SOMETHING UNNATURAL IS GOING ON! AND YET, THERE'S NOTHING ABOUT THIS FUNERAL THAT ISN'T ORDINARY.

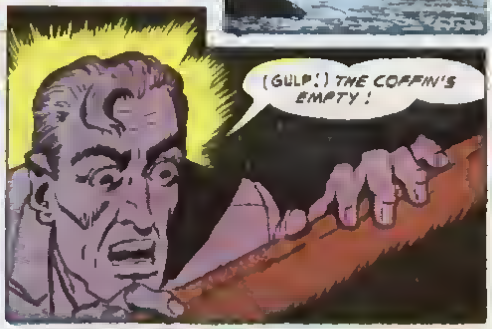

ORDINARY TO THE NAKED EYE, BUT THAT'S ALL! FOR ANYONE WHO IS FAMILIAR WITH THE SECRETS OF THE OCCULT COULD HAVE SEEN AT THAT VERY MOMENT IN THE MAUSOLEUM THE WEIRD APPARITION OF MR. AVARICE.
SO YOU THINK YOU CAN CHEAT ME OUT OF CARRYING OUT YOUR END OF THE PACT BY HIRING SOMEONE TO WATCH YOUR COFFIN! WELL, YOU'RE WRONG, GRAYSON! IF THE PERSON DOING IT WERE DOING IT OUT OF LOVE, YOU MIGHT HAVE BEATEN ME; BUT THE ONLY THING THAT BRINGS BRADLEY HERE IS GREED---THE VERY GREED THAT MADE YOU SO WILLING TO ENTER THE BARGAIN WITH ME! YOU SOLD ME YOUR DEAD BODY AND SOUL! AND I WILL COLLECT THEM!


NO SOONER WAS THE FUNERAL OVER THAN BRADLEY EAGERLY STARTED TO COUNT HIS WEALTH ; OVER AND OVER HE COUNTED THE MONEY, PILED IT HIGH, AND THEN STARTED TO COUNT IT AGAIN ! THIS WOULD HAVE GONE ON ENDLESSLY IF THE CLOCK STRIKING THE TWELVE BONGS OF THE WITCHING HOUR HADN'T INTERRUPTED HIS REVERIE !
TWELVE O'CLOCK ! I PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE MAUSOLEUM EVERY NIGHT TO CHECK ON GRAYSON'S BODY IN THE COFFIN ! BUT IT'S SO SILLY ! WHY SHOULD ANYONE WANT TO STEAL HIS DEAD BODY ?

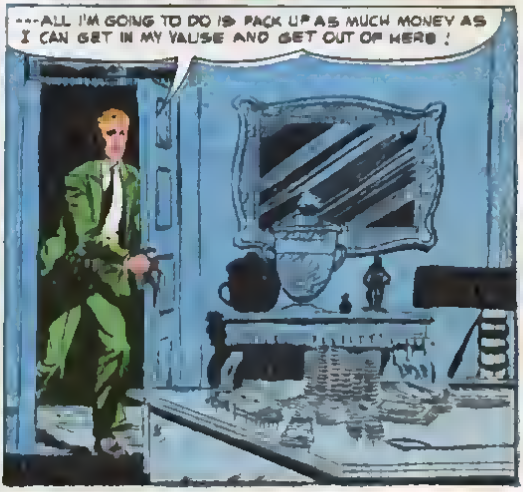
BUT MAYBE I'D BETTER DO IT ! WHO KNOWS IF THE LAWYER HASN'T HIRED SOMEONE TO CHECK UP ON ME TO SEE IF I'M LIVING UP TO THE CONDITIONS OF THE WILL ?


AS MUCH AS I DISLIKE THE THOUGHT OF ENTERING THAT MAUSOLEUM IN THE COLD STILLNESS OF THE NIGHT, THE THOUGHT DOESN'T SCARE ME HALF AS MUCH AS THE THOUGHT OF LOSING ALL THAT MONEY FOR NOT LIVING UP TO THE WILL !


MY KNEES ARE SHAKING ! BUT WHY ? THERE'S NO REASON TO BE AFRAID OF A DEAD BODY !


(GULP !) THE COFFIN'S EMPTY !

--IF MY BODY SHOULD DISAPPEAR, YOU WILL FIND A LETTER IN THE DESK ! YOU MUST CARRY OUT ALL THE INSTRUCTIONS, BUT--
I'M SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS, BUT--


---ALL I'M GOING TO DO IS PACK UP AS MUCH MONEY AS I CAN GET IN MY VALISE AND GET OUT OF HERE !

WITH THE SPEED OF PANIC, THE TERROR-STRICKEN CROOK HASTILY STUFFED ALL THE MONEY HE COULD POSSIBLY SQUEEZE IN INTO HIS SUITCASE!
IT'S JUST TOO BAD I DIDN'T BRING A COUPLE OF EXTRA SUITCASES WITH ME WHEN I MOVED IN, BUT I HAVE ENOUGH DOUGH IN THIS ONE TO LAST ME A LIFE-TIME! NOW I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE FAST!
BUT AS THE FRIGHTENED BRADLEY RUSHED TOWARDS THE DOOR OF THE LIBRARY ----
(GULP) WHERE COULD THAT WATER SUDDENLY HAVE COME FROM?
IF SOMEONE IS PLAYING A TRICK ON ME ---
YOU MUST CARRY OUT ALL MY INSTRUCTIONS OR ALL THE WEALTH I SHALL LEAVE YOU WILL BE WORTHLESS!
(GULP!) ALL THE MONEY TURNED TO WATER! IT'S JUST LIKE GRAYSON SAID! IF I DIDN'T CARRY OUT HIS INSTRUCTIONS, ALL THE WEALTH HE LEFT ME WOULD BE WORTHLESS!
IF I USE MY HEAD I'LL FORGET ABOUT EVERYTHING ELSE BUT GETTING OUT OF HERE! BUT I JUST CAN'T LET SO MUCH MONEY GO TO WASTE! I'VE GOT TO SEE WHAT INSTRUCTIONS HE PUT IN THAT LETTER!
"DEAR MR. BRADLEY, THE ONLY REASON YOU ARE READING THIS LETTER IS BECAUSE MY BODY HAS BEEN SNATCHED FROM MY COFFIN! THAT SHOULD MAKE WHAT FOLLOWS AS UNBELIEVABLE AS IT MAY SEEM BELIEVABLE TO YOU! TO PROTECT THE WEALTH THAT I LEFT YOU, YOU HAVE GOT TO DO AS I NOW COMMAND! MANY YEARS AGO--"
"...I was a lazy no-good just like you who preferred to get his money by robbing the helpless over the thought of getting an honest job. One day as I was fleeing into the woods to hide from the police, I ran into the thickest mist I had ever seen. Suddenly, it cleared...
THAT'S ODD! I'VE PASSED THIS SECTION OF THE WOODS TIME AND TIME AGAIN, BUT I NEVER SAW EITHER THIS WEB OR THE HOUSE!

"AND EVEN THOUGH I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING SUPERNATURAL ABOUT THE HOUSE IN THE WEB, THE LURE OF THE SILVER FENCE AND THE SHINING GOLD TOWER OF THE HOUSE DREW ME INTO THE WEB LIKE THE MOST GULLIBLE FLY.

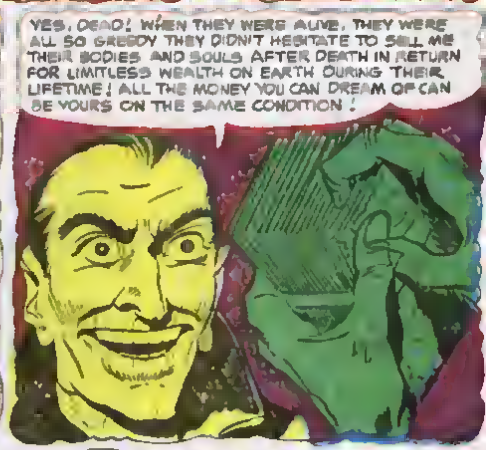
AND AS I CLIMBED OVER THE FENCE, MY GREED MADE ME MORE STUNNED BY THE WEALTH I SAW THERE THAN BY THE HORDE OF WEIRD-LOOKING MEN COUNTING THE FORTUNE BELOW --- MEN WHO WORE THE UNMISTAKABLE LIFELESS EXPRESSION OF THE HYPNOTIZED!

LIKE A MAN DYING OF THIRST ACTS WHEN HE SPOTS A WATER HOLE I REACHED OUT WILDLY TOWARDS THE MONEY WHEN SUDDENLY THE UNEARTHLY LORD AND MASTER OF THE HOUSE IN THE WEB MADE HIS APPEARANCE.

GO AHEAD, MY FRIEND, HELP YOURSELF TO ALL THE WEALTH YOU LIKE! THOSE MEN CAN'T STOP YOU! THEY'RE DEAD!

DEAD?

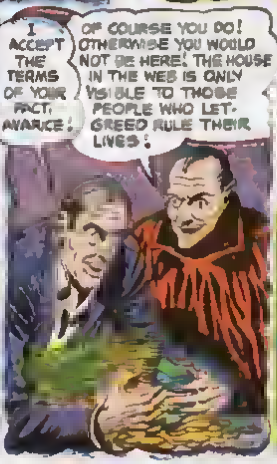
YES, DEAD! WHEN THEY WERE ALIVE, THEY WERE ALL SO GREEDY THEY DIDN'T HESITATE TO SELL ME THEIR BODIES AND SOULS AFTER DEATH IN RETURN FOR LIMITLESS WEALTH ON EARTH DURING THEIR LIFETIME! ALL THE MONEY YOU CAN DREAM OF CAN BE YOURS ON THE SAME CONDITION!



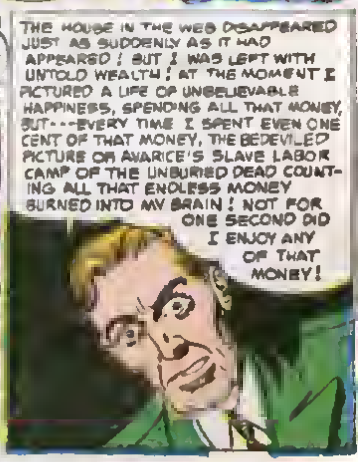
ALTHOUGH THE EYES OF THE MEN DOOMED TO SPEND AN ETERNITY COUNTING AVARICE'S UNLIMITED WEALTH REFLECTED THE AGONY OF THE UNBURIED DEAD, THE GLITTER OF THE GOLD WAS TOO MUCH FOR ME TO RESIST.

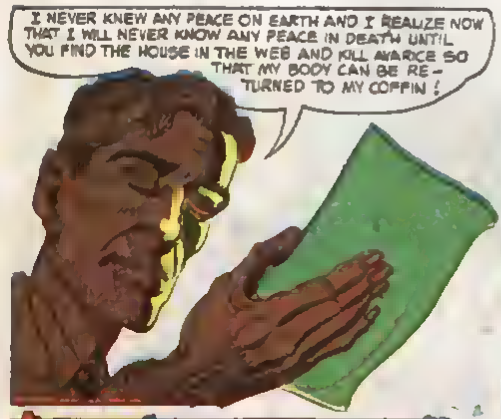
I ACCEPT THE TERMS OF YOUR PACT, AVARICE!

OF COURSE YOU DO! OTHERWISE YOU WOULD NOT BE HERE! THE HOUSE IN THE WEB IS ONLY VISIBLE TO THOSE PEOPLE WHO LET GREED RULE THEIR LIVES!

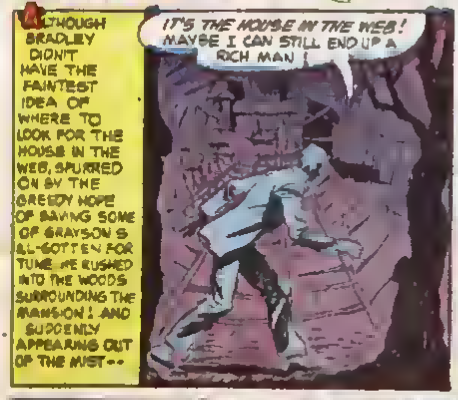


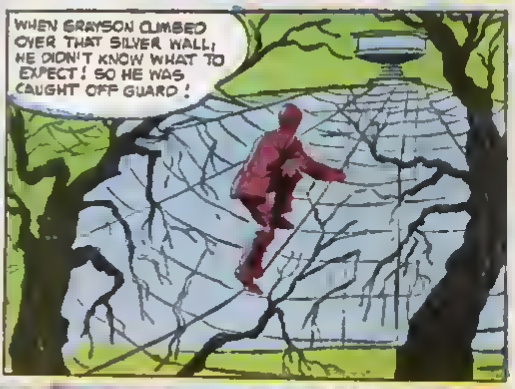
THE HOUSE IN THE WEB DISAPPEARED JUST AS SUDDENLY AS IT HAD APPEARED! BUT I WAS LEFT WITH UNTOLD WEALTH! AT THE MOMENT I PICTURED A LIFE OF UNBELIEVABLE HAPPINESS, SPENDING ALL THAT MONEY, BUT---EVERY TIME I SPENT EVEN ONE CENT OF THAT MONEY, THE BEDEVILED PICTURE OF AVARICE'S SLAVE LABOR CAMP OF THE UNBURIED DEAD COUNTING ALL THAT ENDLESS MONEY BURNED INTO MY BRAIN! NOT FOR ONE SECOND DID I ENJOY ANY OF THAT MONEY!




I NEVER KNEW ANY PEACE ON EARTH AND I REALIZE NOW THAT I WILL NEVER KNOW ANY PEACE IN DEATH UNTIL YOU FIND THE HOUSE IN THE WEB AND KILL AVARICE SO THAT MY BODY CAN BE RE-TURNED TO MY COFFIN!

THAT LETTER WAS WRITTEN BY A MADMAN AND I'D BE JUST AS MAD IF I TOOK ANY STOCK IN IT! AND YET--THE MONEY IN THE SUITCASE DID TURN TO WATER! IF I WANT TO SAVE ANY OF THE MONEY GRAYSON LEFT ME, I MUST AT LEAST MAKE THE ATTEMPT TO SEE IF ANYTHING HE WROTE WAS TRUE!


ALTHOUGH BRADLEY DIDN'T HAVE THE FAINTEST IDEA OF WHERE TO LOOK FOR THE HOUSE IN THE WEB, SPURRED ON BY THE GREEDY HOPE OF SAVING SOME OF GRAYSON'S ILL-GOTTEN FORTUNE HE RUSHED INTO THE WOODS SURROUNDING THE MANSION! AND SUDDENLY APPEARING OUT OF THE MIST--
IT'S THE HOUSE IN THE WEB! MAYBE I CAN STILL END UP A RICH MAN!


WHEN GRAYSON CLIMBED OVER THAT SILVER WALL, HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT! SO HE WAS CAUGHT OFF GUARD!

BUT I KNOW WHAT I'M HERE FOR ---ONLY ONE PURPOSE. TO KILL AVARICE!

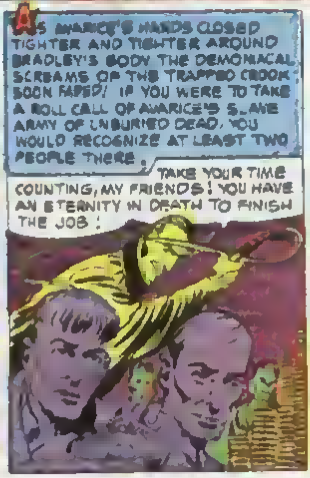
THAT BULLET WENT RIGHT THROUGH HIS HEART. MY JOB IS DONE!
BANG
BANG

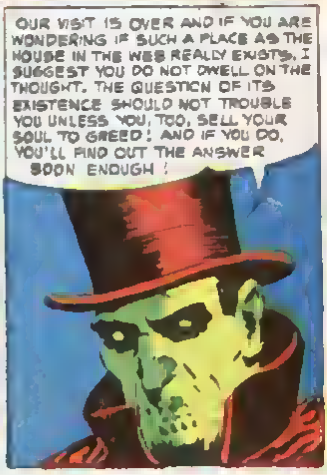
(GULP!) HE'S NOT DEAD! IT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
TO KILL ME, MY FRIEND, YOU HAVE TO KILL THE GREED IN YOUR OWN HEART FIRST!

I DON'T WANT ANY PART OF THE FORTUNE GRAYSON LEFT ME; YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL BACK! ALL I WANT TO DO IS GET OUT OF HERE ALIVE!
AGAIN YOUR GREED IS COMMANDING YOUR SOUL! YOU WERE WILLING TO TAKE GRAYSON'S MONEY AND ENJOY IT, BUT NOW WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR KEEPING YOUR PART OF THE BARGAIN YOU'RE WILLING TO FORGET EVERYTHING TO SAVE YOUR OWN HIDE

SINCE YOU WERE BOUND TO END UP HERE SOONER OR LATER BECAUSE OF YOUR GREED THERE IS NO POINT IN LETTING YOU LEAVE NOW!

HELP! HELP!
NOTHING CAN HELP THE GREEDY!

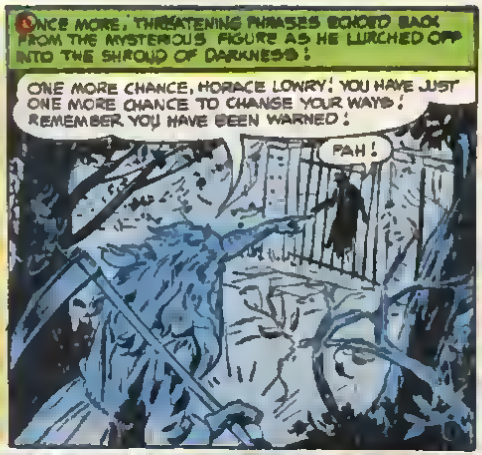

AS AVARICE'S HANDS CLOSED TIGHTER AND TIGHTER AROUND BRADLEY'S BODY THE DEMONIACAL SCREAMS OF THE TRAPPED CROOK SOON FADED! IF YOU WERE TO TAKE A ROLL CALL OF AVARICE'S SLAVE ARMY OF UNBURIED DEAD, YOU WOULD RECOGNIZE AT LEAST TWO PEOPLE THERE.
TAKE YOUR TIME COUNTING, MY FRIENDS! YOU HAVE AN ETERNITY IN DEATH TO FINISH THE JOB!


OUR VISIT IS OVER AND IF YOU ARE WONDERING IF SUCH A PLACE AS THE HOUSE IN THE WEB REALLY EXISTS, I SUGGEST YOU DO NOT DWELL ON THE THOUGHT. THE QUESTION OF ITS EXISTENCE SHOULD NOT TROUBLE YOU UNLESS YOU, TOO, SELL YOUR SOUL TO GREED! AND IF YOU DO, YOU'LL FIND OUT THE ANSWER SOON ENOUGH!

UNFATHOMABLE ARE THE SECRETS OF LIFE---AND DEATH! UNCANNY ARE THE MALEVOLENT POWERS THAT CAN STRIKE A MAN DOWN IN THE PRIME OF YOUTH AND VIGOR! AND UNEARTHLY IS THE FATE OF ANY MAN WHO DARES DEFY GRIM WARNINGS AND INVITES UPON HIMSELF THE GHASTLY TERRORS OF....
THE AGED CURSE!
NO...NO! WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME? STOP!
THE WIND HOWLED LIKE LOST SOULS THAT COLD AND WINTRY NIGHT AS THE STRANGE OLD FIGURE SHUFFLED OUT OF THE DARK AND APPROACHED THE RUSTED WROUGHT-IRON GATES.
YES, THIS IS THE PLACE. LET ME IN... LET ME IN!
OLD PEOPLE'S HOME
WITHIN THE OLD PEOPLE'S HOME, HEADMASTER HORACE LOWRY SAT IN HIS OFFICE, ANGRILY REBUFFING THE REQUEST OF ONE OF HIS SENILE CHARGES.
NO, YOU CAN'T HAVE ANOTHER BLANKET! OLD FOOLS! YOU'RE ALWAYS WHINING AND COMPLAINING AND WHEEDLING! BUT YOU WON'T GET ANY CODDLING FROM ME! YOU'VE GOT TO BE RUN WITH AN IRON HAND! NOW GET OUT!
Y-YES S-SIR!

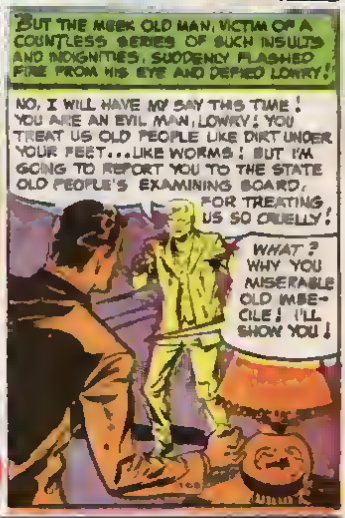
NOW WHO'S BANGING ON THE GATE THIS TIME OF NIGHT ? MY STAFF IS BUSY WITH THE CHORES AND CAN'T GO SEE !
BANG BANG
FORCED TO GO HIMSELF, HORACE LOWRY TOOK OUT HIS ILL-TEMPER ON HIS HELPLESS INMATES, FOR WHO HAD NOT THE SLIGHTEST SYMPATHY OR RESPECT !
I'LL HAVE TO SEE WHO'S AT THE GATE MYSELF. OUT OF MY WAY, YOU OLD FOGIES !
OHHH !
OOF !
WELL ! YOU'RE A QUEER ONE. WHO THE DEVIL ARE YOU ? WHAT DO YOU WANT ?
I'M AN OLD MAN, SIR ! LET ME IN OUT OF THE COLD ! TAKE ME INTO YOUR HOME, PLEASE !
FEELINGLY, WITH A HEART OF STONE, LOWRY HAD NO PITY FOR THE OLD CREATURE AND BRUTALLY TURNED HIM AWAY INTO THE BITTER
NO -- GO AWAY ! WE'RE ALL FILLED UP ! THERE'S NO ROOM FOR ANY MORE OLD DOTARDS LIKE YOU !
BUT I HAVE NO-WHERE ELSE TO GO ! PLEASE.....I BESEECH YOU..... HAVE MERCY ON AN OLD MAN ! I'M COLD...HUNGRY.. HOMELESS !
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND PLAIN ENGLISH ? I SAID --- GO !
IS THAT YOUR FINAL WORD TO ME, HORACE LOWRY ? TAKE CARE ! THINK ABOUT WHEN YOU GET OLD, WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE TREATED THIS WAY ?
EYES BURNING OMINOUSLY, THE QUEER OLD MAN SPOKE SLOW-MEASURED WORDS THAT FOR A FLEETING MOMENT SENT A CHILL DOWN LOWRY'S SPINE !
TAKE CAREFUL HEED OF THESE WORDS I SPEAK NOW ! IF YOU WERE OLD AND HELPLESS..... WOULD YOU TREAT YOURSELF THIS WAY ?

WHAT SENSELESS GIBBERISH IS THAT? ONCE AND FOR ALL, GET ON YOUR WAY AND---HEY, WHAT ARE YOU WRITING IN THAT LITTLE BLACK BOOK?
YOUR SINS AGAINST THE AGED AND INFIRM, HORACE LOWRY.

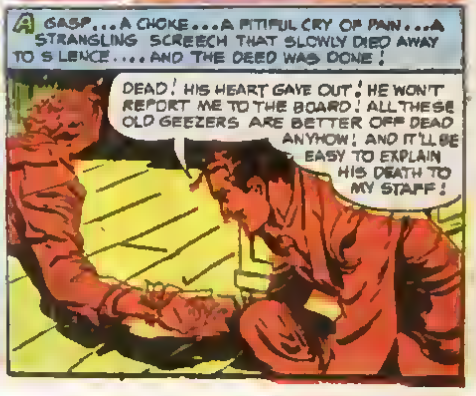

ONCE MORE, THREATENING PHRASES ECHOED BACK FROM THE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE AS HE LURCHED OFF INTO THE SHROUD OF DARKNESS!
ONE MORE CHANCE, HORACE LOWRY! YOU HAVE JUST ONE MORE CHANCE TO CHANGE YOUR WAYS! REMEMBER YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!
PAH!

WARNED? SINS AGAINST THE AGED? OH RUBBISH! WHY DO I EVEN THINK ABOUT IT! NOW WHAT DO YOU WANT, BODKINS?
PLEASE, SIR... EXCUSE ME, SIR... ...IT'S ABOUT MY CLOTHES, SIR!

LOOK, THEY ARE ALL FULL OF HOLES! PLEASE, SIR, MAY I HAVE BETTER CLOTHES?
CERTAINLY NOT! RAGS ARE PLENTY GOOD ENOUGH FOR AN OLD MAN LIKE YOU. NOW GET OUT! DO YOU HEAR ME? OUT!


BUT THE MEEK OLD MAN, VICTIM OF A COUNTLESS SERIES OF SUCH INSULTS AND INDIGNITIES, SUDDENLY FLASHED FIRE FROM HIS EYE AND DEFIED LOWRY!
NO, I WILL HAVE MY SAY THIS TIME! YOU ARE AN EVIL MAN, LOWRY! YOU TREAT US OLD PEOPLE LIKE DIRT UNDER YOUR FEET... LIKE WORMS! BUT I'M GOING TO REPORT YOU TO THE STATE OLD PEOPLE'S EXAMINING BOARD, FOR TREATING US SO CRUELLY!
WHAT? WHY YOU MISERABLE OLD IMBECILE! I'LL SHOW YOU!

HELP... I'M A FEEBLE OLD MAN... DON'T HURT ME... PLEASE... I HAVE A WEAK HEART!
EXACTLY! I'M COUNTING ON THAT! A LITTLE SHOVING AROUND AND...

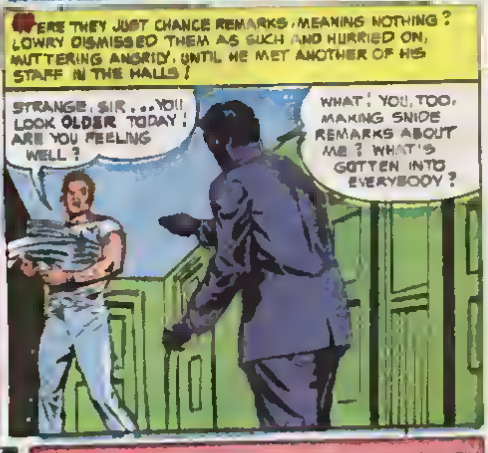

A GASP... A CHOKE... A PITIFUL CRY OF PAIN... A STRANGLING SCREECH THAT SLOWLY DIED AWAY TO SILENCE... AND THE DEED WAS DONE!
DEAD! HIS HEART GAVE OUT! HE WON'T REPORT ME TO THE BOARD! ALL THESE OLD GEEZERS ARE BETTER OFF DEAD ANYHOW! AND IT'LL BE EASY TO EXPLAIN HIS DEATH TO MY STAFF!

POOR OLD BOOKING! WE WERE HAVING A NICE LITTLE CHAT WHEN SUDDENLY HE JUST KEELED OVER LIKE THAT! I WAS SHOCKED!
WEAK HEART! I EXPECTED IT ANY DAY! WELL, IT'S A LONELY GRAVE IN POTTER'S FIELD FOR HIM!
WITHOUT FAMILY OR FRIENDS IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD, THERE WAS NO ONE TO MOURN THE MORTAL REMAINS OF OLD BOTKINS---OR WAS THERE?
REST IN PEACE, WEARY SOUL! BUT THERE WILL BE NO PEACE NOW--FOR YOUR KILLER!
OLD BOOKING IS DEAD AND BURIED! AND IF ANY MORE WHINING OLD WRETCHES BOTHER ME, THEY'LL GET THE SAME---EH? DO I SEE LINES IN MY FACE THIS MORNING?
JUST A LITTLE PEAKED, THAT'S ALL! I'LL MAKE THE ROUNDS AND HAVE SOME FUN NEEDLING THE OLD DODDERERS!
GOOD MORNING, PEABODY! YOU LOOK AWFUL THIS MORNING! YOU'RE ONLY SEVENTY-FIVE, BUT YOU COULD EASILY PASS FOR NINETY. YES, YOU LOOK SIMPLY TERRIBLE!
EH? BUT YOU DON'T LOOK---EH---SO GOOD YOURSELF TODAY, MR. LOWRY! YOU LOOK--OH--TEN YEARS OLDER SOMEHOW.
HOW DARE YOU INSULT ME LIKE THAT, YOU ANCIENT BAG OF BONES? WHY, I'LL... I'LL...

BUT LOWRY WAS FURTHER STARTLED AS MORE MOCKING LAUGHTER CAME FROM ALL THE OLDSTERS AROUND, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME HE FELT AN ICY CLUTCH OF FEAR!
BY GOLLY, CLEM IS RIGHT! HE DOES LOOK OLDER! HEE, HEE!
YES, HE'S SHOWING AGE!
OH, SHUT UP, YOU LYING FOOLS! I--I--CAN'T WASTE TIME HERE!

THEY WERE JUST MOCKING ME, THAT'S ALL. I'LL GET ABOUT MY BUSINESS.... NOW WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT, NURSE?
WHY...WHY... MR. LOWRY!

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE NOTICED IT, BUT YOU'VE GOT SOME ...GRAY HAIR!
GRAY HAIR? AT MY AGE? I DO NOT APPRECIATE THE HUMOR, NURSE!


WERE THEY JUST CHANCE REMARKS, MEANING NOTHING? LOWRY DISMISSED THEM AS SUCH AND HURRIED ON, MUTTERING ANGRILY, UNTIL HE MET ANOTHER OF HIS STAFF IN THE HALLS!
STRANGE, SIR... YOU LOOK OLDER TODAY! ARE YOU FEELING WELL?
WHAT! YOU, TOO, MAKING SNIDE REMARKS ABOUT ME? WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO EVERYBODY?

SIT DOWN AND WAIT YOUR TURN---OH, IS THAT YOU, LOWRY? FOR A MOMENT I--UH--THOUGHT IT WAS SOMEONE OLDER ...UH--ONE OF THE INMATES, IN FACT!
THE DOCTOR, TOO!

HEART POUNDING, FEELING AS THOUGH SOME GHASTLY INVISIBLE NET WERE SLOWLY DROPPING ABOUT HIM, HE RUSHED BACK TO HIS OFFICE IN RAFFLED PANIC!
ARE...ARE THEY ALL IN A CONSPIRACY AGAINST ME? PLAYING A JOKE ON ME? I'D BETTER TAKE A LOOK IN MY MIRROR IN THE OFFICE.

A SHOCK STAGGERED HIM LIKE A BOLT OF LIGHTNING AT THE REFLECTION HE SAW MOCKING HIM ! A SHRIEK GIBBERED FROM HIS LIPS !
GREAT HEAVENS ! NO--NO! IT'S...IT'S IMPOSSIBLE !
I--I'VE AGED TWENTY YEARS! I LOOK LIKE A MAN OVER SIXTY! H-HOW COULD THIS ALL HAPPEN IN A FEW SHORT HOURS ? IT'S ..UTTER ...MADNESS !
IN MOUNTING DREAD AND HORROR, HE SAW THAT IT WAS NOT ONLY HIS FACE THAT HAD AGED ; HIS WHOLE BODY WAS UNDERGOING A TERRIFYING TRANSFORMATION !
MY H-HANDS...SCRAWNY AND VEINED! AND THEY TREMBLE, LIKE THOSE OF AN OLD MAN ! TH-THIS IS FRIGHTFUL!
AND I'M GETTING OLDER ALL THE TIME ! I CAN FEEL IT...I'M AGING RAPIDLY ! NO--NO--STOP! WHY IS THIS UNEARTHLY THING HAPPENING TO ME ? WHY ?
WHEN WILL THIS HORRIBLE THING STOP ? WILL I KEEP ON GETTING OLDER---AND OLDER--AND OLDER ! I'LL GO MAD ! I CAN'T UNDERSTAND THIS FANTASTIC THING ! EAAAAA !!
BUT THEN, WITH HIS REASON TOTTERING AT THE VERGE OF AN ABYSS, HE TOOK HOLD OF HIMSELF ! SHUDDERINGLY, HE TRIED TO THINK WHAT TO DO...
I--I HATE OLDNESS...I--I CAN'T BEAR TO LOOK AT THE GHASTLY OLD FACE I NOW HAVE ...THERE, THAT'S BETTER ! BUT WHAT SHALL I DO ? WHERE WILL THIS END ? WHEN ?
I--I'LL SEE THE DOCTOR ABOUT THIS ! BUT NOBODY ELSE MUST SEE ME IN THIS FRIGHTFUL CONDITION ! THE HALL IS CLEAR !

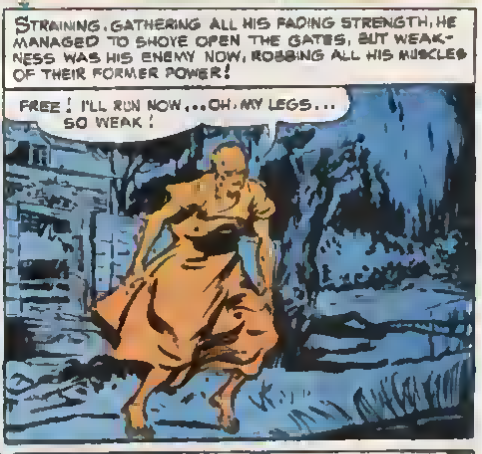
DOCTOR! LOOK AT ME! I'M HORACE LOWRY, THE HEADMASTER, BUT LOOK AT MY FACE.....MY HORRIBLE, OLD FACE!
YES, I KNOW, HORACE LOWRY! I KNOW!
B-BUT YOU'RE NOT THE DOCTOR! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE IN HIS PLACE? WH--WHO--?
HIS EYES BULGED IN TERROR AT THE UNEXPECTED FIGURE WAITING THERE! CACKLING WORDS SMOTE HIS EARDRUMS AND HAMMERED INTO HIS SPINNING BRAIN.
DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME, MY DEAR HEADMASTER? I'M THE OLD MAN YOU TURNED AWAY FROM YOUR GATES ON THAT BITTER COLD NIGHT! BUT I'M BACK NOW! THE BRUTAL DEATH OF POOR OLD BOOKINS BROUGHT ME BACK!
IT WAS YOUR LAST CHANCE, WRETCH! YOU FAILED TO HEED MY WARNING! IT WAS THE FINAL BLACK MARK AGAINST YOU-- AND NOW YOU MUST PAY!
BUT--BUT--JUST WHO ARE YOU? TELL ME. I MUST KNOW!
WHO AM I? WELL, THEY CALL ME FATHER TIME...OR OLD AGE... OR THE PATRON OF THE OLD! WHAT MATTERS THE NAME? SUFFICE IT THAT I CAME TO GIVE YOU THE...CURSE OF AGE!
CURSE OF AGE? TH-THEN YOU MADE ME LIKE THIS, YOU EVIL MONSTER!
CURSE ME, WILL YOU? I'LL SHOW YOU; I'LL CHOKE THE LIFE OUT OF YOU, IF YOU DON'T RELEASE ME! YOU'RE OLD AND WEAK LIKE ALL THE OTHERS!
AM I, LOWRY?
IN TOWERING RAGE, HE SPRANG ON THE FEEBLE OLD MAN. ALWAYS BEFORE, WITH HIS BRUTE STRENGTH, HE HAD EASILY BROWBEATEN AND MANHANDLED ALL SUCH WEAK CLOISTERS AS THIS!

BUT NOTWITHSTANDING, INCONTINENTLY, HIS ADVERSARY IGNORED HIS TENDERFUL FINGERS! AND THEN, CHUCKLING IN MOCKERY, THE ANCIENT MAN STRUCK BACK!
MORTAL FOOL! I HAVE STRENGTH ----THE STRENGTH OF RIGHTEOUS WRATH!
OHHH!
TH-THIS IS ALL CRAZY--INSANE! I MUST ESCAPE... GET TO MY OFFICE...LOCK MYSELF IN!
EH? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WE'RE LOOKING FOR MR. LOWRY! HAVE YOU SEEN HIM AROUND?
YOU IDIOTS, I'M HORACE LOWRY! CAN'T YOU SEE? BUT GET OUT! I WANT TO BE ALONE! GET OUT!
NOW WAIT A MINUTE, OLD TIMER! YOU AREN'T MR. LOWRY, THE HEADMASTER! HE'S ONLY HALF YOUR AGE! ARE YOU KIDDING?
IT DID NO GOOD FOR LOWRY TO SHRIEK OVER AND OVER WHO HE REALLY WAS! HIS AGED, SEAMED FACE BELIED HIS VERY WORDS, AND THE INVISIBLE BONDS OF TERROR TIGHTENED ABOUT HIM!
BUT I TELL YOU, I'M LOWRY, YOUR HEADMASTER! YOU MUST LISTEN....PLEASE..
POOR OLD FELLOW! HE MUST BE ONE OF THE NEW ONES IN WARD B! ..YOU KNOW, MENTAL CASES! TAKE HIM ALONG, ALBERT.. TREAT HIM GENTLY!
NO, I WON'T GO! I'M NOT AN INMATE! I'M HORACE LOWRY! LET ME GO...STOP...
EASY, GRANPOP! YOU'RE COMING WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT!
MENTAL ANGUISH CLOUDED HIS TORTURED MIND! WHEN THE HAZE CLEARED, HE FOUND HIMSELF IMPRISONED....TRAPPED!
NO---LET ME GO! NURSE--NURSE.... SOMEBODY.... PLEASE.... THEY ALL THINK I'M ONE OF THE OLD MEN!..(SOB)

BUT YOU ARE AN OLD MAN NOW, HORACE LOWRY! YOU ARE GETTING OLDER AND WEAKER ALL THE TIME! THEY'LL NEVER LET YOU GO AGAIN -- -NEVER!
YOU! BLAST YOU! BUT I'LL ESCAPE THIS YET. WAIT AND SEE! I'M NOT LICKED!

WITH THE CUNNING OF THE OLD HE QUIETED DOWN AND WAITED...WAITED FOR THE DARKNESS OF NIGHT TO CONCEAL HIS ESCAPE FROM THE BED, AND WARD, AND HOUSE!
I'LL LEAVE THIS MADHOUSE! I'LL FIND SOMEBODY WHO KNOWS ME AND WILL BELIEVE MY STORY!

BUT I'M SO OLD AND FEEBLE.....HAVE I GOT THE STRENGTH TO OPEN THE GATE?... ...OOF.....

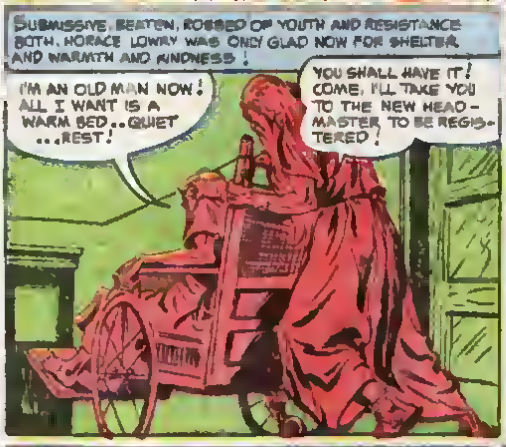

STRAINING, GATHERING ALL HIS FADING STRENGTH, HE MANAGED TO SHOVE OPEN THE GATES, BUT WEAKNESS WAS HIS ENEMY NOW, ROBBING ALL HIS MUSCLES OF THEIR FORMER POWER!
FREE! I'LL RUN NOW...OH, MY LEGS... SO WEAK!

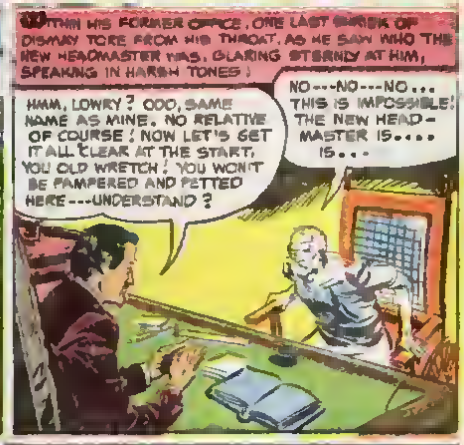
HE PITCHED INTO THE DIRT, SOBBING AND GASPING, WITH HIS LAST SHREDS OF YOUTHFULNESS GONE REPLACED ONLY BY THE HELPLESSNESS OF EXTREME OLD AGE!
I---I CAN'T MOVE ANOTHER STEP! I'LL FREEZE OUT HERE! HELP...HELP ME, SOMEBODY...FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN...HELP!

YES, I'LL HELP YOU, HORACE LOWRY! ARE YOU READY TO GO BACK?
NO! I---I--- OH, WHAT'S THE USE? I'M SPENT...EXHAUSTED... I CAN'T RESIST ANY MORE!

YOU REFUSED ME ENTRY HERE, HORACE LOWRY! YOU TURNED ME, AWAY INTO THE FREEZING NIGHT! REMEMBER THOSE WORDS I SPOKE THEN---WOULD YOU TREAT YOURSELF THIS WAY?....AND NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO SEEK ENTRY!
NO---DON'T TURN ME OUT! PLEASE.. HAVE MERCY! DON'T TURN MY OWN WICKED DEED AGAINST ME!

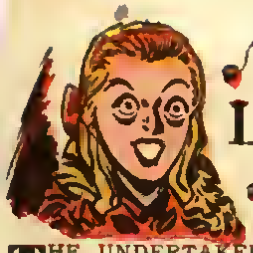
BUT MERCY WAS EXTENDED TO HORACE LOWRY, WHO HAD NEVER EXTENDED MERCY HIMSELF!
NO, OF COURSE I WON'T TURN YOU OUT! SUCH IS NOT YOUR FATE, FOR THOSE WORDS HAVE ANOTHER MEANING. YOU WILL SOON BE SAFE AND WARM INSIDE!


SUBMISSIVE, BEATEN, ROBBED OF YOUTH AND RESISTANCE BOTH, HORACE LOWRY WAS ONLY GLAD NOW FOR SHELTER AND WARMTH AND KINDNESS!
I'M AN OLD MAN NOW! ALL I WANT IS A WARM BED..QUIET ...REST!
YOU SHALL HAVE IT! COME, I'LL TAKE YOU TO THE NEW HEAD-MASTER TO BE REGISTERED!


WITHIN HIS FORMER OFFICE, ONE LAST SHOCK OF DISMAY TORE FROM HIS THROAT, AS HE SAW WHO THE NEW HEADMASTER WAS, GLARING STERNLY AT HIM, SPEAKING IN HARSH TONES!
HMM, LOWRY? ODD, SAME NAME AS MINE. NO RELATIVE OF COURSE! NOW LET'S GET IT ALL CLEAR AT THE START, YOU OLD WRETCH! YOU WON'T BE PAMPERED AND PETTED HERE---UNDERSTAND?
NO---NO---NO... THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE! THE NEW HEAD-MASTER IS.... IS...

....MYSELF!

AND AT LAST, AS THE STRANGE OLD FIGURE SHUFFLED OFF WITH A LAST MOCKING CHUCKLE, HORACE LOWRY UNDERSTOOD WHAT HIS WORDS HAD REALLY MEANT...
WOULD YOU TREAT YOURSELF THAT WAY?



LOST CHORDS

By John Martin

THE UNDERTAKER waa drésaed professionally in black and he glanced ponderously toward Marwith, the lawyer, for permisaion to speak. Marwith nodded.

"By the terms of your husband's will, Mrs. Graven, he is to be buried from hia own house." He paused unctuously. "The moment you informed Mr. Marwith that he had died last night in his sleep, Mr. Marwith phoned me. According to family tradition, started two generations agn, Mr. Graven provided for us to—ah—service him in the event nf death."

"I see nn objection," Helene Graven said. She wondered why thia pompous idiot was making all the fuss. She glaoced at Marwith. But the lawyer was taking it all aeriously. Professional fools, standing on ceremony. She could have laughed. But it would not have been seemly to laugh in the face of death. After all, her husbend, dead from heart failure, was lying in the next room. "You can go right ahead."

Marwith interrupted. "There is another provision of the will that I, as John Graven's lawyer, must aee carried through."

"I presume there is little enough money to come to me," Helene Graven said hitterly.

"Your husbeod left everything to you, Mrs. Graven," Marwith said smoothly. "But the expenses of his illnessea ate up moat of the estate's principal, as you know. The poor man worked himself to death." Marwith paused and stared at her accusingly for an instant. Then the hland, professional look came hack into hia eyes.

Helene Graven dllowad an lcy look to stah toward Marwith, from her hard, blue eyes. Idiot, she thought. If she hadn't insisted that John work at popular music night and day they'd have starved long ago. Almost voluntarily she sneered. John, stupid John Graven, the master of popular music who wanted to write great symphonies. She'd heen more practical and, besides, she'd known a fifth-rate Bach nr Beethoven, as John fancied himself, would he lost in a world of other fifth-raters. Overworked himself? Nonsense, she thought to herself. What's the difference if a man dies from overwork later nr atarvation earlier? Why, she had done John a favor by driving him. Heart disease had finally overtaken him. Starvation—never.

"This other provision of the will, Mr. Marwith," ahe hegan, impatiently. "You apoke of . . ."

"It is merely that nothing in your husbend's study be touched until after the funeral," Marwith said. "And, of course, he is to be laid out there."

She atarted up violently, cursing herself for not removing the pagea hefore this. "But that'a imposaihle!" she protested. "Two nights agn he finished the sheets of a new popular aong. I've read it and it's a sure-fire sale. This is my chance to retrieve at least something from the estate. The song will sell millions nf copies, and even a day's delay might . . ."

Marwith shook his head. "The will ia clear," he said hlandly. "Mr. Graven paid me as a lawyer. I must protect hia intereats, living or dead. The will states," Marwith'a voice hardened and he glanced toward the room where John Graven lay dead, "that he wanted hia dsath room untouched and to be laid dead in it, hecause for the first time, after death, he would know the feeling of owning his nwn possessions." He stood up and heckoned to the undertaker. "I believe it'a time for you to take over, Mr. Henge." He turned to Helene Graven. "It would he hest to accept the situation. In accordance with the will, I have also taken an inventory of the contents of the study. There is a specific clause disinheriting you utterly should an item he missing." He put on his hat. "Good morning, Mrs. Graven. Again, may I offer my sympathy and solicitations on your bereavement."

His voice hsd heen hollow, mocking, Helene

Graven thought as the hearse drove away with John's remains. She paced up and down the drawing room like a caged tigar. Twice she draw herself to tha door of the study and peeped in. There, on the desk, ley the two or three manuscript pages of the song, completa with lyrics. It was possible, she mused, that words of her had relations with John might heve seeped through to the outside world. They saw almost no one. Helene had seen to that. And John spent all his time writing the melodies he hated.

A letter tn some friend might heve carried news of his unhappiness, though. Her lips writhed. She had hesn right in heting him, in marrying him for the prospects of his talent.

Near midnight, Mr. Henge returned with the remains and a few assistants. They spent the neat few hours putting the room in state. Helene watched them from ths door like a hawk, careful to see that nothing was touched. Then, after they had gone, she atood there, the clock chiming two, irresolute, desiring to steal. She aet a foot tentatively in the room, then drew it back as though it had been burned, shuddering. So near to riches and yet so far, sha thought. The song was worth, perhaps, fifty thousand dollers—providad it was gotten on the market in time. It was a seasonal little ditty about autumn, hut clevsr, catchy. It would meke the Hit Parade. But once let the tima pass . . .

Helene Greven hit her lip as she prepared for bed. The time was almost gone now. And she had no other resources. She locked the study door and retired to the small bedroom, thinking of the prospects of starving.

At first, for half an hour she tossed and turned, unable to sleep. The thought of a corpse, upstairs, didn't bother her much, she told herself. It was the strange tinkle of music in her head thet kept her half awake. A low sound, something old and memorable, yet nothing she had ever heard before.

And when she fell asleep, at last, the sounds still ware there. Burning sheets of music manuscript, flaring in violent colors crossed the blackboard of her mind in dreams. A mad crescendo of notes danced across her brain. She tossed feverishly.

And then Halene Greven woke. She shivered in the pre-dawn chill. The luminous clock said five-thirty. Then sha heerd the music and sprang out of bed, her blood froaen. It was coming from John's study, from John's piano. Lights whirled before her eyes as she remembered there was no one in there, thet the windows and doors were locked. But fear conquered whatever reason she could muster.

She fled, screaming, for the phone.

"Marwith—Marwith . . ." she moaned into the phone. There was a long pause. The music played on snd then Marwith answered. She mumbled a few words end then fainted.

When she awoke, it was morning. Marwith end a nurse peered down at her, in concern.

"You said something about music coming from your husband's study," Merwith began professionally. He laid a hand on her wrist as her eyes flared in fright. "Imagination, my dear Mrs. Greven, pure imagination." He shook his head. "I found tha key end went in. Nothing has baen disturbed. Mr. Graven is—eh—just as Mr. Henge left him."

She rose, despite their protests and tottered to the study door. Bright sunlight dispelled some of the grimness of the room. Her eyes fell on the music manuscript. It was still there. She crossed the room end caressed it. Then, as her eyes fell on the composition, she screamed.

"Marwith — Marwith — look! Good Lord, look! The manuscript of the song is gone — no — it's been erased!" She picked up the title page, scanned the notes. "But — hut this is something John wrota long ago, some trashy, old-fashioned thing for strings." She paused, shaking. "I wouldn't let him set it down!"

"Something he — he *wanted* to write?" Marwith asked, tight-lipped. He crossed to the piano, glancing at the keys. "Yes, the keys heva baen smudged, hut . . ." A note of fright came into his voice as he peered at the windows. "The windows are locked and you said you locked the door, end—and . . ." he tottered to the coffin. "Only Henge has the key to this. He was to have opened it this morning for services, for the minister. But, Mrs. Graven, the lock is broken!"

THE END

THE DANCE OF THE DEAD!

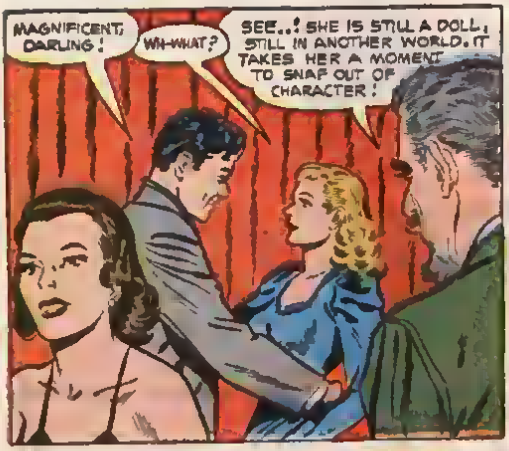
ACROSS THE INVISIBLE DIVIDE THAT SEPARATES THE WORLD OF THE LIVING FROM THE WORLD OF THE DEAD, THAT UNSEEN, UNKNOWN LINE BETWEEN SUN AND SHADOW, SPRING AND WINTER, A STRANGE POWER REACHED OUT TO DRAW THE WARM VIBRANCY OF A LIVING SOUL INTO THE COLD AND UNLIT CAVERNS OF THE DOOMED!

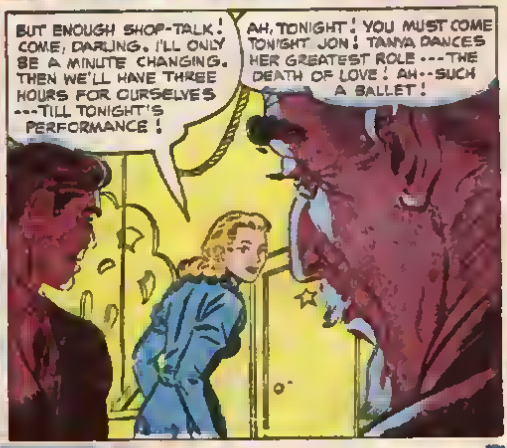
WHEN TANYA DANCED, THE AUDIENCE WAS WRAPPED IN SILENCE. YOUNG, BEAUTIFUL AND PRIMA BALLERINA, SHE WAS MORE THAN THAT! AN AUTUMN LEAF . A WOOD NYMPH...THE WIND ON A MOONLIT NIGHT...SUCH WAS TANYA!

AND AS THE POPULAR BALLET, DANCING DOLLS, DREW TO A CLOSE, THE BEAUTIFUL DANCER'S FIANCE AND TEACHER WAITED AND WATCHED FROM THE WINGS AS USUAL.

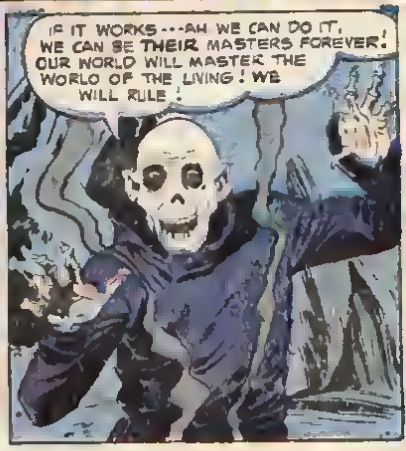
IT IS THE FINISH, PANUTO! AH--EVERY DAY SHE DANCES MORE BEAUTIFULLY!

YES, JON! SHE HAS A REMARKABLE ABILITY! NEVER HAVE I KNOWN A DANCER WHO SO COMPLETELY BECOMES WHATEVER ROLE SHE DANCES! WATCH - SHE COMES OFFSTAGE NOW.



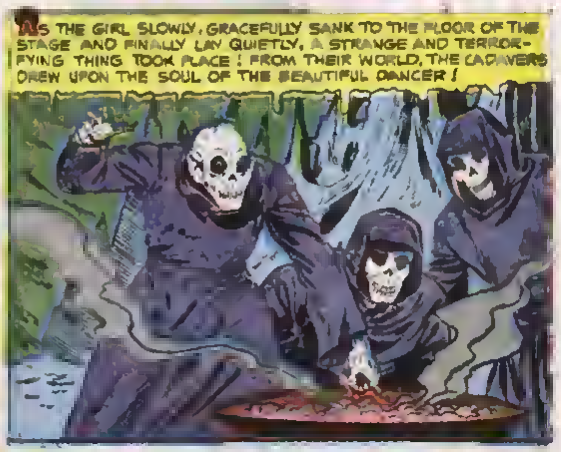


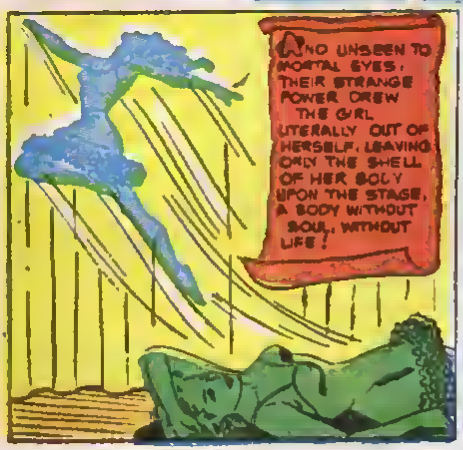
THE HAPPY LOVERS HURRY OFF, UNAWARE THAT A STRANGE, UNSEEN AUDIENCE HAS BEEN WATCHING ...WATCHING FROM ANOTHER WORLD WITH EYES THAT SEE THROUGH ALL MORTAL THINGS!



THE LAUGHTER OF THE THREE GHOULS RANG ACROSS THE CRAGS OF THEIR SUNLESS WORLD AND ECHOED THROUGH THE SKY LIKE A WIND GONE MAD. AGAIN AND AGAIN THEY LAUGHED TILL NIGHT FELL AND THEY SUDDENLY GREW SILENT. BUT FAR BELOW, ON THE STAGE OF THE BALLET THEATRE ....

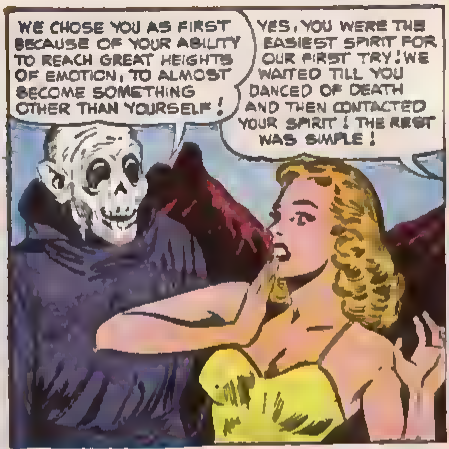
AS THE GIRL SLOWLY, GRACEFULLY SANK TO THE FLOOR OF THE STAGE AND FINALLY LAY QUIETLY, A STRANGE AND TERRIFYING THING TOOK PLACE! FROM THEIR WORLD, THE CADAVERS DREW UPON THE SOUL OF THE BEAUTIFUL DANCER!



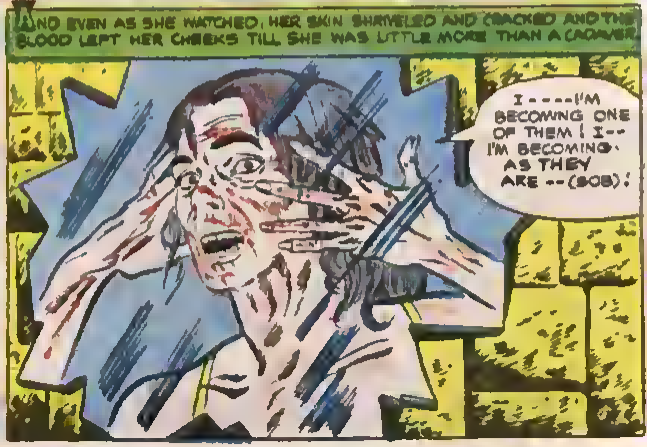


MEANWHILE, THE CURTAIN FELL AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BALLET TRIED TO ROUSE THE FORM OF THE BALLERINA. SUDDENLY...
SHE--SHE'S ALL COLD! I--I CAN'T WAKE HER!
HEAR--LET ME THROUGH!
I'LL GET HER TO HER DRESSING ROOM! BRING A DOCTOR---HURRY!
AND FAR AWAY AMID THE SUNLESS AND CRAGGY PEAKS OF THE OTHER WORLD, THE LIVING, BREATHING TANYA LAY IN A DEEP SLEEP AS YET UNAWARE SHE HAD JOURNEYED AS NO MORTAL HAD EVER JOURNAYED!
SHE IS EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN SHE SEEMED FROM AFAR.
AND SHE IS OURS---OURS!
MMMM... OOOOH!
LOOK! SHE BEGINS TO WAKE.
STIRRING ONCE AGAIN TANYA SLOWLY OPENED HER EYES. GRADUALLY, SHE BEGAN TO SEE THROUGH THE HALF-LIGHT AND, AS THE THREE FRIGHTENING FIGURES CAME INTO VIEW, A SCREAM OF TERROR BURST FROM HER LOVELY THROAT.
EEEEEE
WH-WHERE AM I? WHAT?... WHO ARE YOU?
DON'T SCREAM, MY DEAR! WE WON'T HURT YOU!

YOU ARE IN THE WORLD OF THE DEAD! WE BROUGHT YOU HERE; YOU ARE ONE OF US NOW!
N--NO! THIS--IS A HORRIBLE DREAM!
D-DON'T COME NEAR ME! I--I DON'T BELIEVE YOU! I-I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE!
HER VOICE BREAKING WITH FEAR, DESPITE HERSELF, THE GIRL TURNED AND BEGAN TO RUN; TERROR PUT WINGS UPON HER FEET AND SHE RAN WILDLY, BLINDLY, WANTING ONLY TO ESCAPE, TO FLEE THE HORRIBLE TRIO!
BUT TANYA RAN ON GROUND THAT HAD NEVER FELT THE SOFT TOUCH OF NEW GRASS; THROUGH AIR THAT NEVER KNEW THE CARESS OF THE SUN; RUN AS SHE DID, ONLY BLACKENED CRAGS AND WITHERED STUMPS MET HER GAZE! FINALLY---
I--I CAN'T RUN ANY FARTHER --(CHOKE)! THIS--THIS IS ANOTHER WORLD!
IT--(SOB)--IT'S TRUE! I-I'M IN ANOTHER WORLD!
THE SOBS OF A TERROR-STRICKEN HEART WERE STRANGELY IN PLACE IN THIS UGLY LAND AND AS TANYA HEARD THE SOUND OF SHUFFLING STEPS, SHE RAISED HER EYES IN HELPLESSNESS AS--
YOU RAN FAR, MY DEAR. BUT NOW YOU ARE BEGINNING TO BELIEVE US EH? GOOD; IT WILL BE EASIER THAT WAY!
WHAT--- WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS? WHY HAVE I DIED? I--I'VE ONLY TRIED TO BRING BEAUTY INTO THE WORLD WITH MY DANCING.
YOU HAVE NOT DIED AS MOST PEOPLE DO, THOUGH ON EARTH IT WILL SEEM SO. WE WILLED YOU HERE; YOU ARE A TRAPPED LIVING SOUL--OUR FIRST! WE HAVE ONLY BEGUN! THERE WILL BE OTHERS--MANY OTHERS!

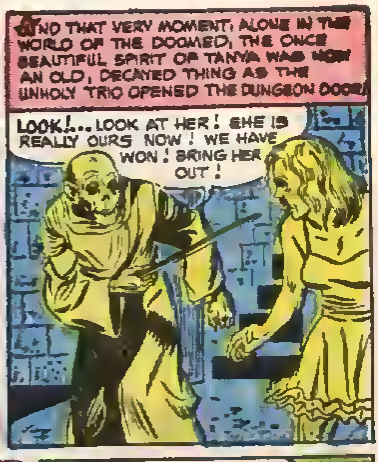


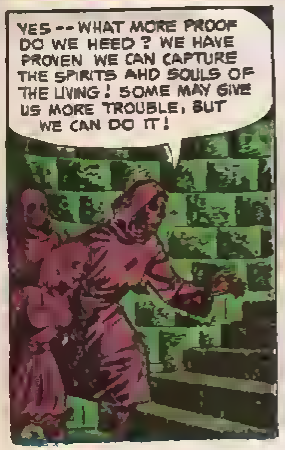
AND SO THE FEAR-STRICKEN GIRL WAS LEFT ALONE. HOURS DRAGGED BY, YET SHE REFUSED TO LOSE HOPE, REFUSED TO BELIEVE IT WAS MORE THAN A TERRIBLE DREAM. BUT SUDDENLY, AS A LOCK OF HER HAIR FELL DOWN IN DISARRAY, SHE GASPED.

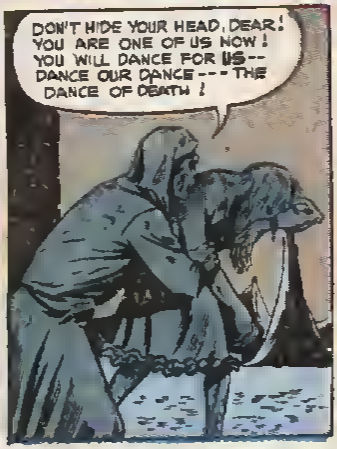


MEANWHILE, ON MORTAL EARTH, THE SILENCE OF THE GRIEF-STRICKEN HUNG HEAVILY IN THE AIR AT THE BALLET THEATRE!
THERE'S NO HEART-BEAT I CAN DETECT! I-I'M AFRAID THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO!

MY TANYA!... MY LOVED ONE!
I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! NO SIGN OR ANYTHING -- JUST TO GO LIKE THAT! IT ---IT'S BEYOND ANYTHING I'VE EVER SEEN!


AND THAT VERY MOMENT, ALONE IN THE WORLD OF THE DOOMED, THE ONCE BEAUTIFUL SPIRIT OF TANYA WAS NOW AN OLD, DECAYED THING AS THE UNHOLY TRIO OPENED THE DUNGEON DOOR!
LOOK!...LOOK AT HER! SHE IS REALLY OURS NOW! WE HAVE WON! BRING HER OUT!

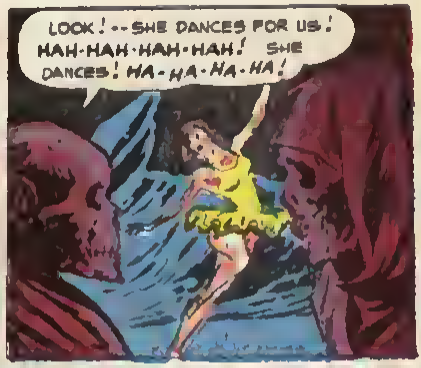

YES -- WHAT MORE PROOF DO WE NEED? WE HAVE PROVEN WE CAN CAPTURE THE SPIRITS AND SOULS OF THE LIVING! SOME MAY GIVE US MORE TROUBLE, BUT WE CAN DO IT!


DON'T HIDE YOUR HEAD, DEAR! YOU ARE ONE OF US NOW! YOU WILL DANCE FOR US-- DANCE OUR DANCE --- THE DANCE OF DEATH!

WE WILL SHOW HER! COME --WATCH US, MY DEAR ----WATCH!

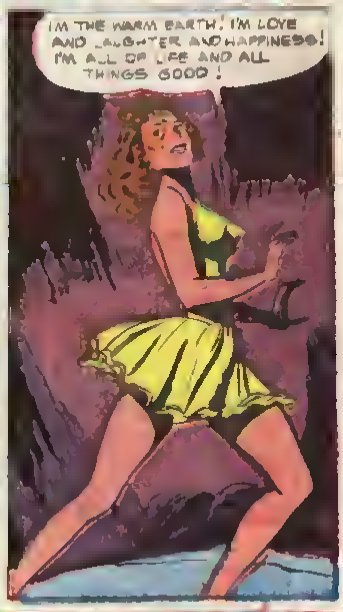
WITH HIGH GLEE, THE CADAVERS BEGAN TO DANCE ABOUT TANYA. FIRST A MACABRE MINUET THEN A FEARSOME BIGADOON TO THE WAILING WINDS!

AROUND AND AROUND THEY DANCED; UNTIL SUDDENLY THE SKELETON THAT WAS ONCE A GIRL IN THE FULL BEAUTY OF LIFE RAISED HER HEAD. FROM THE WITHERED LIPS BURST A CRY AND THE GHOULS WERE TOO BUSY TO SEE THE STRANGE LIGHT IN HER EYES.

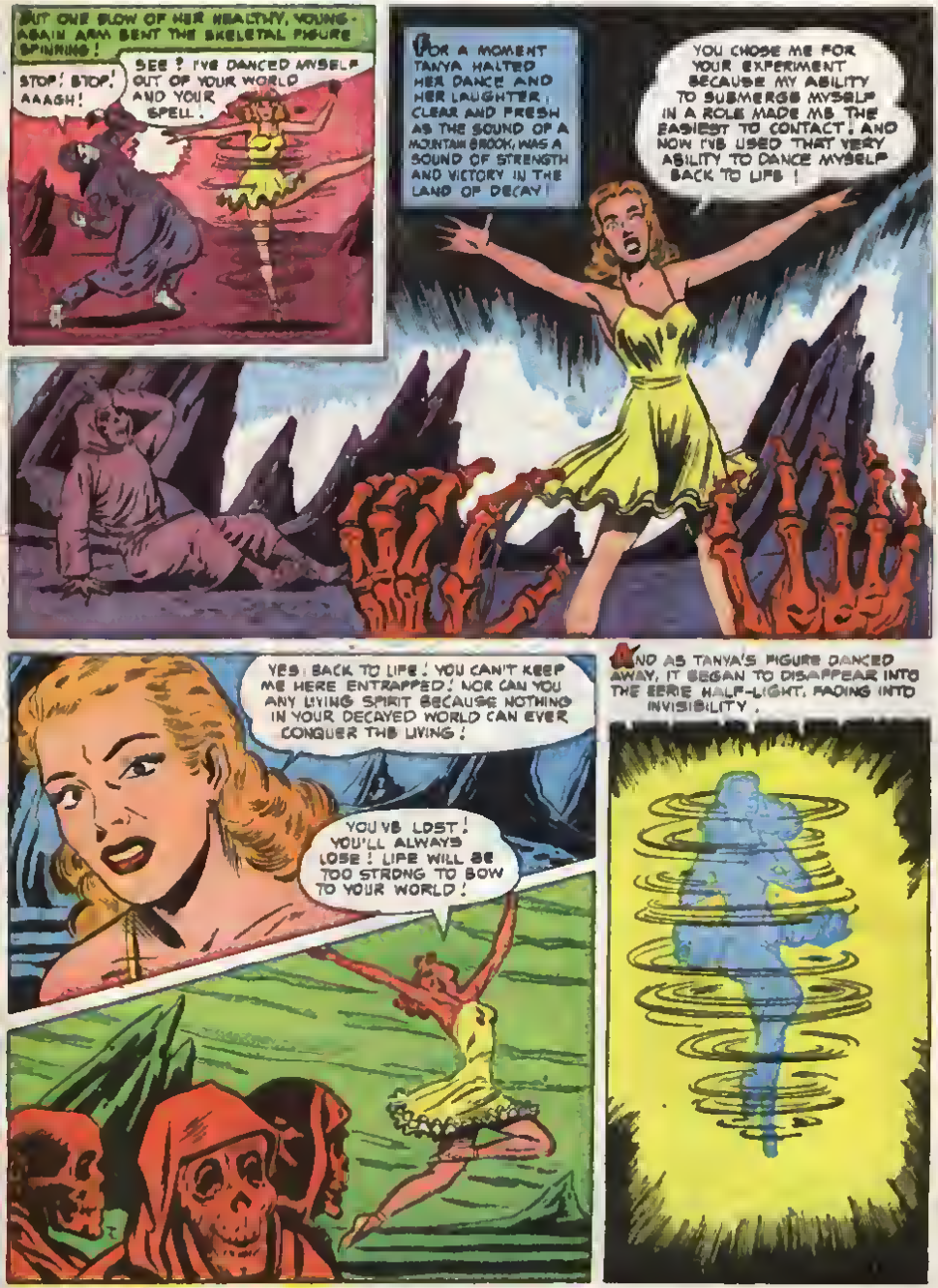


FIERCELY, WILDLY, TANYA DANCED AS SHE HAD NEVER DANCED BEFORE AND HER CAPTORS CHORTLED AS THEY WATCHED, TAKING IT TO BE THE MAD ABANDON OF COMPLETE SURRENDER!

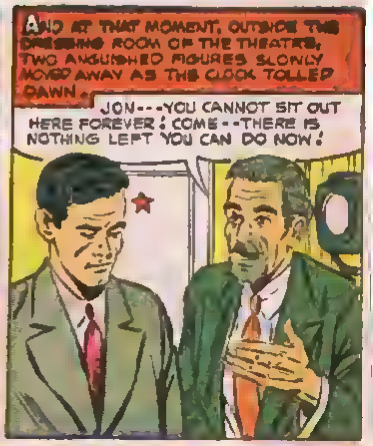
BUT HAROLY NOTICEABLE AT FIRST, AND THEN WITH STARTLING SUDDENNESS, THE GIRL'S FACE GREW FULLER AND SHE BEGAN TO CHANGE INTO HER FORMER SELF AS SHE DANCED! THE SURPRISED GHOULS SAW THEN THAT HER LIPS MOVED CONSTANTLY AS SHE WHIRLED.

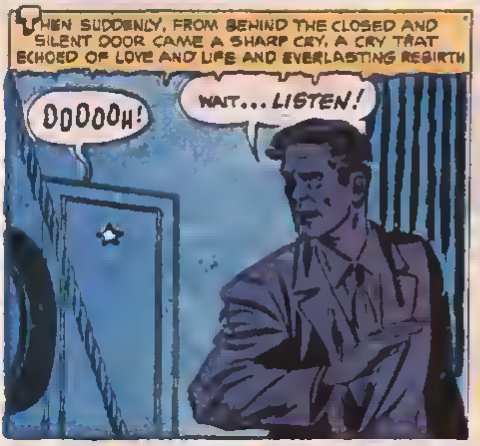


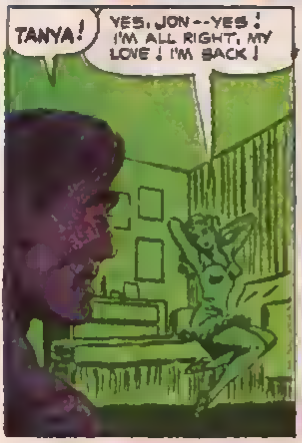
AND SUDDENLY, TANYA WAS HERSELF, ONCE AGAIN, STILL DANCING THE FULL BLOOM OF HER BEAUTY RESTORED AND VIBRANT ONCE MORE!

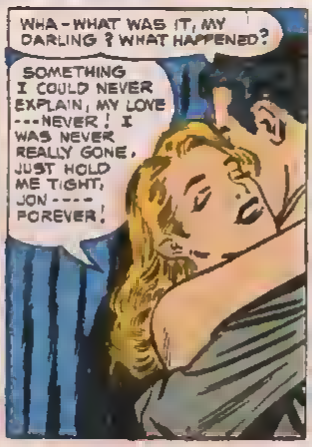

BUT ONE BLOW OF HER HEALTHY, YOUNG-AGAIN ARM SENT THE SKELETAL FIGURE SPINNING!
STOP! STOP! AAAGH!
SEE? I'VE DANCED MYSELF OUT OF YOUR WORLD AND YOUR SPELL.
FOR A MOMENT TANYA HALTED HER DANCE AND HER LAUGHTER, CLEAR AND FRESH AS THE SOUND OF A MOUNTAIN BROOK, WAS A SOUND OF STRENGTH AND VICTORY IN THE LAND OF DECAY!
YOU CHOSE ME FOR YOUR EXPERIMENT BECAUSE MY ABILITY TO SUBMERGE MYSELF IN A ROLE MADE ME THE EASIEST TO CONTACT! AND NOW I'VE USED THAT VERY ABILITY TO DANCE MYSELF BACK TO LIFE!
YES! BACK TO LIFE! YOU CAN'T KEEP ME HERE ENTRAPPED! NOR CAN YOU ANY LIVING SPIRIT BECAUSE NOTHING IN YOUR DECAYED WORLD CAN EVER CONQUER THE LIVING!
YOU'VE LOST! YOU'LL ALWAYS LOSE! LIFE WILL BE TOO STRONG TO BOW TO YOUR WORLD!
AND AS TANYA'S FIGURE DANCED AWAY, IT BEGAN TO DISAPPEAR INTO THE EERIE HALF-LIGHT, FADING INTO INVISIBILITY.

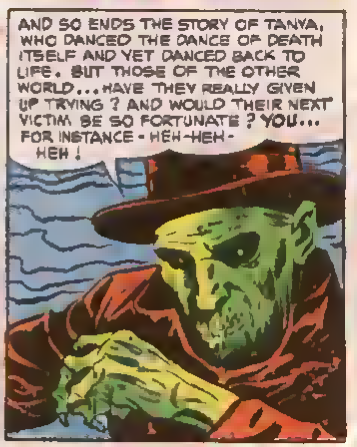
THROUGH THE UNCHARTED WASTES OF TIME AND SPACE, TANYA'S INNER SELF DRIFTED HOMEWARD, A SPIRIT FREED OF THE GRISLY PLOT FROM ANOTHER WORLD!


AND AT THAT MOMENT, OUTSIDE THE DRESSING ROOM OF THE THEATRE, TWO ANGUISHED FIGURES SLOWLY MOVED AWAY AS THE CLOCK TOLLED DAWN.
JON---YOU CANNOT SIT OUT HERE FOREVER! COME--THERE IS NOTHING LEFT YOU CAN DO NOW!


THEN SUDDENLY, FROM BEHIND THE CLOSED AND SILENT DOOR CAME A SHARP CRY, A CRY THAT ECHOED OF LOVE AND LIFE AND EVERLASTING REBIRTH
DOOOOH!
WAIT... LISTEN!


TANYA!
YES, JON--YES! I'M ALL RIGHT, MY LOVE! I'M BACK!


WHA-WHAT WAS IT, MY DARLING? WHAT HAPPENED?
SOMETHING I COULD NEVER EXPLAIN, MY LOVE ---NEVER! I WAS NEVER REALLY GONE, JUST HOLD ME TIGHT, JON---- FOREVER!


AND SO ENDS THE STORY OF TANYA, WHO DANCED THE DANCE OF DEATH ITSELF AND YET DANCED BACK TO LIFE. BUT THOSE OF THE OTHER WORLD... HAVE THEY REALLY GIVEN UP TRYING? AND WOULD THEIR NEXT VICTIM BE SO FORTUNATE? YOU... FOR INSTANCE - HEH-HEH-HEH!

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